



TASK FORCE FALCON



Falcon Flier

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APRIL 3, 2002

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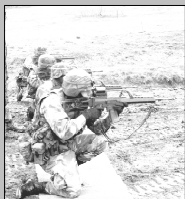
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Spc. Terry Boggs/photo

Smoke billows and the ground shakes as the 3rd Battalion, 6th Field Artillery performs the first ever KFOR live-fire exercise from Radar Hill, Camp Bondsteel. Two M198 Howitzer guns fired off (11) M804 'Smurf' rounds, apiece, at a 1KM target area during this exercise.

Shot out...

'King of Battle' puts steel on target during fire mission

by Spc. Terry Boggs
Staff Writer

CAMP BONDSTEEL—It was the culmination of months of patience and training, as the 3rd Battalion, 6th Field Artillery took to Radar Hill for their first live fire exercise in Kosovo.

It was just one more crowning achievement for the "King of Battle."

Hearts were pounding and adrenaline was pumping as two words blared from the small radio speaker. "Fire mission" set the wheels in motion as the pumped up 'Redlegs' from (Fort Drum, N.Y.'s) 3-6 performed their jobs with speed and accuracy.

The actual time that elapsed from when Fire Direction Control (FDC) said those two words until the round was sailing through the air was mere seconds. The sound of the gunpowder detonation was deafening, and the ground shook from it, but the heightened feeling

of excitement was quite contagious as the gun crew and observers watched the shell disappear over the horizon.

The acrid aroma of burnt gunpowder remained slightly longer than the thunderous sound that permeated the air.

The whole affair had a sense of occasion, as it well should have. Staff Sgt. Justin Barkley, ammunition sergeant, 3-6 Field Artillery, was present to share in the thrill of the moment.

"We're the first ones to fire from Radar Hill," Barclay proudly proclaimed. "It's like going into the history books, as being the first ones."

The 3-6 has performed many other tasks during its deployment here, such as guard duty and dry-fire missions, but none more exciting to them than this one.

As far as getting the troops fired up for the exercise, Barkley had to say just one thing.

"We're shooting live

ammunition' it's all it takes," according to Barkley. "Doing dry-fire is not too realistic, but during live-fire they get all hyped up."

And hyped up is exactly what these soldiers were, as they got the order to fire, loaded the ammunition, and released their round. They moved quickly and efficiently, like a well-oiled machine.

It all sounds kind of dangerous to the people on the receiving end, but do not be frightened by the term 'live-fire'. The only thing live about this kind of round is the noise it makes when it leaves the tube. 1st Lt. Peter Gray, 3-6 FA Executive Officer, explained why.

"These are not high-explosive (HE) rounds," said Gray. "They're what we call Smurf rounds (M804). When it impacts and the fuse functions, smoke pops out of the 4 vents on the round. So it does not actually explode."

Simply stated, the only way you could get hurt by one of these 'Smurfs' is to get hit in the head with one.

This is good news for those that live near the impact area, especially since, according to Gray, it is less than a Kilometer from the nearest town.

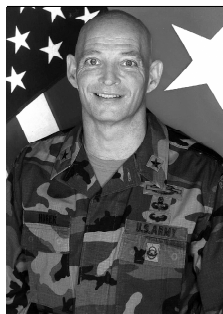
You would never know, however, from watching these soldiers, that the ammunition was dummy rounds, instead of high explosives. The fervor and proficiency that were demonstrated during the fire mission were as real as the M198 Howitzer guns that they were shot from.

This is a huge contrast from the real 'live-fire' rounds, which have a kill radius of about 50 meters.

During a normal live fire, on a regular range, the high explosives are used. But, because of the houses in the (Please see ARTILLERY, page 15)

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TFF Commanding General

Duty, Honor, Country: the meaning behind the words

Brig. Gen. Keith M. Huber

I am going to talk about the words that are on the rings that those of us who attended West Point proudly wear. This infamy of Duty, Honor, Country, what does that mean? What should they mean to you?

Duty. Webster defines duty as conduct due to parents and superiors. As I look at why I went to West

Point, it was because of the look of pride that I saw on my parents' faces. That is why I went there and the reason why I stayed there, and believe me those were a long, hard four years. I stayed there out of a fear of disappointing my parents. And I suspect that is what motivated a lot of us. So you look at this word duty, and it says conduct due to parents. That hits home with me. And for me personally, that is what motivates me. It is a fear of disappointment. That's what motivates me to this day, it is my fear that I won't be worthy to be a soldier with all of you. That somehow, something that I'll do, will not meet your level of expectation. And I will tell you that the men and women of this TF that I proudly

serve with today, you exceed my expectations every day.

The only difference between any of you and me is that I have been around a couple of more days. I have had some different experiences. But every day you use your instincts and you've got to trust them. So when your instincts tell you it's not right, it's not right. And peer pressure, you've got to cast aside. Being popular is not a leadership requirement. When you are privileged to command, it is a lonely place. So with that responsibility, the joy of being in charge, being entrusted with the lives of the sons and daughters of America, that is truly a privilege. However, the burden can crush you. If you are focused on making popular decisions and being popular amongst your soldiers, then you are focused on the wrong thing. Because your soldiers will know you, and that is why they will follow you. They will follow you out of a sense of mutual respect and love. They will follow you to the death if you are worthy of it.

Honor. This is defined as reputation. So as you talk about what you do as a soldier, as a leader and why you do it. In my mind, there is only one person you need to satisfy every morning. That's the person you see every morning in the mirror. If you cannot be true to yourself, if who you portray yourself to be is not who you are in your heart, why then on deployments like this, it will show. People will know. People will see that you don't act the same way you talk, that you have a different set of standards for

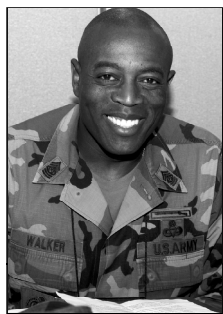
different people. And ultimately all we have is our honor, our reputation. And the more senior you become, that is how you will be selected for critical duty, Honor and Reputation. Once you lose that, you don't have anything left.

Country. This is defined as citizenship. This is what makes us who we are. Is that why we willingly sacrifice everything? Is that why we are here? No! Country to me, is a concept that I have devoted my adult life to, protecting the families of the world, at the expense of my own. I don't think of country as trying to import the United States of America any particular place. Kosovo, shouldn't become like the United States of America. I think the concepts of democracy, free trade, the freedom of movement, the freedom of choice, and free elections; those are the concepts, which we are graced to have in our country. The concepts of a democracy gather their strength from diversity, from tolerance of other people. We are a walking representation of the United States of America. We are ambassadors of the United States. People shape their opinions of the United States of America based on their interaction with us.

Do your duty, what the Army asks you to do. Do it with honor and maintain the reputation of yourself and the unit that you proudly serve with. Do it for country, so that other nations can enjoy the freedoms that we do.

Climb to Glory...To the Top!

TFF Command Sergeant Major

Teamwork: our key to successful mission accomplishment

Command Sgt. Maj. Ted Walker

Someone once wrote "No man is an island." That is true in our Army, where teamwork is a must to mission accomplishment. It does not matter what branch of service, or military background, all members play a role in the success of the organization. The Preamble of the Constitution starts off with 'We the people' meaning

a whole; a unit comes together with a purpose of doing something for the greater good. Even

though the Army's new theme of "An Army of One", may be misleading to some, to others like me it is an indication that as "One" we are together. But are we on the same team? When I was younger and played athletics in high school, our football team's motto before and after games, in wins and losses, was a line that I often think about today while I visit with each of you. Our head coach would always ask us what's our strength...our reply was always "Oneness". To us those words didn't come cheap. We paid the price, because we were willing to, before practice, during practice and after practice and on game nights. Even though a slogan didn't make us better as athletes, we were better as a team, because we were united and we were one. What's your unit's strength? Is it "Oneness"? If not, are you doing your part? Also, what Army value are you reinforcing as you conduct your day-to-day business? Does it say 'emulate me,

for this is the right way to do business.'? Are you reaching out to those who need your help both professionally and personally?

Remember we are "An Army of One" and remember that strength lies in numbers.

We still have some time to go before we can say 'end of mission.' Stay in your lane, and focus on your piece of the puzzle. Don't worry about things you can't control. It would only add to the madness. Do what you know is the right thing, despite what every one else thinks. Shape the battlefield by setting the conditions and in leaving Kosovo better than it was. Continue to lead the way in safety, discipline and military courtesy.

Until next time...

Climb To Glory...to the Top!

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Soldier on the Street

What is your best memory of Kosovo?



Spc. Richard Sancho,
PSS Clerk
10th SSB
(Camp Bondsteel)

"Taking clothes and toys to the school we visit in Ferizaj/Urosevac."



Pfc. Migeul Santa Cruz,
Infantryman
Co. B, 1st Battalion, 32nd Inf. Regt.
TF 1-32 Infantry "Chosin"
(Camp Magrath)

"The kids. They were awesome."



Spc. Mike Phillips,
RTO
1st Battalion, 30th Inf. Regt.
(Camp Monteith)

"I've been lucky enough to make it two months without being hit by bird poop!"



Sgt. LaShonda Blue,
Medical Logistician
TFMF (226th Medical Bn.)
(Camp Bondsteel)

"I just arrived here from Germany and so far I have enjoyed the weather."



Sgt. Eric Nolls,
Infantryman
B Co., 2nd Battalion, 14th Inf. Regt.
TF 1-30
(Camp Monteith)

"Being downtown. The people really treated us well, and I appreciated that. They know we're away from home."



Cpl. Jose Flores,
Supply Clerk
HHC, 1st Battalion, 30th Inf. Regt.
TF 1-30
(Camp Monteith)

"My favorite memory is meeting Mariah Carey."

— Compiled by TFF Falcon Flier Staff

Commentary

Helping Kosovo's kids

by Spc. Molly Jones
Staff Writer

Since I have been in Kosovo, I've had the opportunity to go to many towns and schools, and see how KFOR mingles and interacts with the local population. Although most of my travels have been with the different companies of 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment (TF 1-30), I'm sure it is the same throughout MNB-E. The soldiers have come to form a close connection with the children in each of their operating sectors.

On many occasions, I've seen the children call soldiers by their names and warmly greet them on the street in passing. The soldiers have been touched, as I have been, by the children and their lack of the many things that we, as Americans, take for granted.

One day just before Christmas, I visited a school on a nearby mountain, in the village of Mucibaba, which is in Alpha, 1-30's sector. The children were all huddled together around a single textbook, not only because they lack in the area of school supplies, but to stay warm. The small children in this tiny mountain village, and their desire to learn, touched me. At that moment, I decided I had to do something to help.

I arrived back at Camp Monteith, but was not able to stop thinking of the cold, shivering children. I called home that evening to have my mother go through my closet and my younger sister's closet and gather up some things to send to the children and the teacher.

Shortly afterwards, I met Cpl. Jason Hamm, who was in the process of collecting coloring books and crayons for the smaller children of Kosovo. He wanted to give something that would spark their imagination, and he knew crayons would be a great way to go. Being the artistic person that I am, I decided to help him out.

So, I wrote a letter home asking for small donations of school supplies and items of clothing, like gloves and such, to help the kids through the winters. Shortly after I e-mailed the letter, I received word from several different churches and organizations that they wanted to help as well.

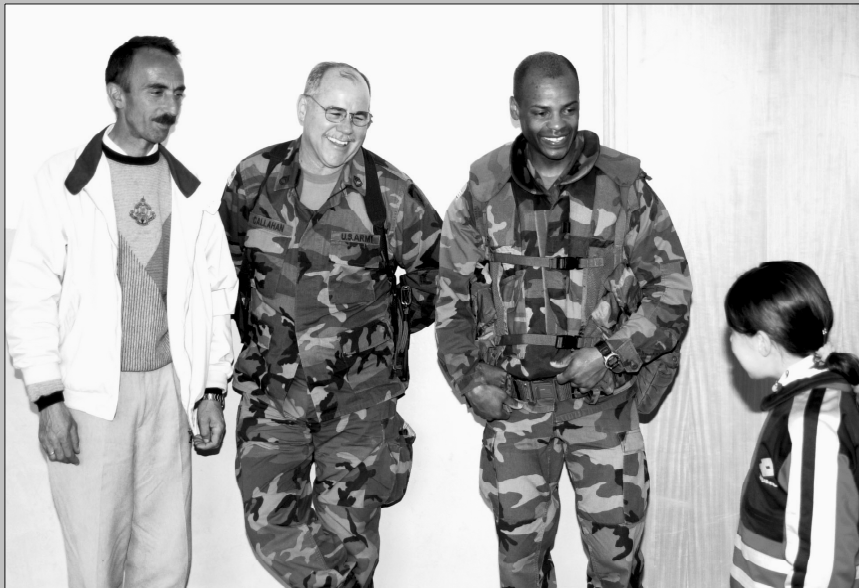
To this date, I have received, hopefully the last of the boxes of donations, which ended up totaling more than 50 boxes from 13 different organizations and individuals. The task in dividing everything up and ensuring it was properly given out was quite a job! I was overwhelmed by the generosity of the people back home. I not only received donations from people I knew, but I had boxes from people all over the States sent to me.

I have realized that most people my age, or any age for that matter, may never have the chance to see what true poverty is, and what it looks like. Though I am here working and doing my job, it is hard to feel like I am benefiting the local population, because I'm not out doing patrols and whatnot. But now that I've provided some children, and their family members, with a few essentials, though they are only a minute percentage of the population, I feel as if I've done what I could to help.

Our overall mission here in Kosovo is to provide a safe and secure environment, but another is to help improve upon the existing educational system here. If we can start helping out the children, the future of the province, we can eventually make it a better place. The only problem is that the small children have to buy their own books and other school supplies. KFOR soldiers are out in these small villages and far away towns for hours a day helping teach these children, most in their spare time.

They are teaching them a variety of subjects, but most importantly English. We all feel compelled to help the people any way we can, because they are so grateful of the many things we take for granted at home. I doubt that many of the soldiers will go home feeling like they have not had a hand in bettering this province.

Virginia Church, TFF civilian, reservists team up to help school



Cpl. Taylor Barbaree/photo

Sgt. 1st Class (P) Michael Callahan, 416th Engineer Team (second from right), and Capt. Larry McDonald, 131st MPAD commander, receive thanks from 10-year-old Drita Rexhepi, a student at Osmanmani Regional Elementary School, after the two delivered clothes and other items, compliments of Cameron United Methodist Church located in Alexandria, Va. Looking on is an Osmanmani School administrator, Ali Aliu.

by Cpl. Taylor Barbaree
Editor

CAMP BONDSTEEL—TFF Falcon (G-3) target analyst Jerry Carter knew he could make a difference by being deployed here. However Carter, a retired Army First Sergeant, never guessed that he would make such a positive impact with both local Serbian and Albanian school children.

"It's a great feeling to leave here and know that in some way I have helped to make a difference," Carter said the day before his redeployment home to Virginia on March 27th. "For those who don't think we are making

a difference in Kosovo, take the time to look around at the ones who are, our soldiers, young men and women, stationed here in Kosovo, that are working with the Kosovo people and their children on a personal level."

Although Carter's involvement with Albanian and Serbian schoolchildren was indirect, he takes great pride in the assistance he received from his Church in Virginia.

"I owe a lot to my wife for spearheading this project and appreciate what our Church (Cameron United Methodist Church of Alexandria, Va.) has been able to do," Carter said, explaining the outpouring of clothes and other items that were collected by Churchmembers and sent to him.

don't know how to thank everyone for what they have done. However, the HHC Commander (Capt. Michael Moricas) told me recently that his soldiers look forward to Tuesdays, because that's the day they visit the school. I then realized that for the ones who are handing out the clothes and providing other help while they are out there working with the children, those smiling faces are all the thanks they want," he said.

Aside from delivering boxes to Ramadan Rexhepi Primary School located in Sojevo (Kosovo) during the early months of Rotation 3B with assistance from TFF HHC, on March 19th soldiers from ASG (P) Falcon's DPW office (416th Facility Engineer Team, U.S. Army Reserve) and TFF PAO (131st MPAD, Alabama Army National Guard) delivered the last of the items from Virginia to Osmanmani Regional Elementary School in Koshtanjeve (Kosovo).

"This is a great experience for our soldiers," noted 131st MPAD Commander, Capt. Larry McDonald. "We appreciate Mr. Carter allowing us to be a part of this mission."

Sgt. 1st Class (P) Michael Callahan, DPW Contractor for ASG (P) Falcon and 416th Engineer Team member, said the 63-mile trip from Camp Bondsteel to the seven-room schoolhouse located atop the mountain of Lama Espahinjeve (some 5,000 feet in elevation) afforded him the opportunity to visit with the school children one final time before his unit's scheduled redeployment back to Fort Worth, Texas.

"My unit has visited with and has had an on-going mission with this school since the beginning of our deployment here," he said. "So it's a great feeling to know that someone or another unit is working with these school children. Looking at these children's smiling faces, you realize that is what makes you glad that you helped in some way."

"After I contacted my wife about the possibility of our churchmembers sending clothes and other items, I learned that more than 100 boxes of items were being sent. It was an overwhelming feeling."

Carter said he then contacted Camp Bondsteel units to assist in the distribution of the items to the school children.

"Civil Affairs, TFF HHC, and the Task Force Falcon Public Affairs Office really came through for us here," Carter said. "Everyone in Virginia appreciates these men and women in uniform that had a hand in dealing with these children directly."

"I am touched deeply with everyone's willingness to help out. I still

TF 1-30 takes school program to new heights

by Spc. Molly Jones
Staff Writer

Access to wonderful public schools with a plethora of classes, books and supplies is something many Americans take for granted, but Task Force 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, from Fort Benning, Ga. has recognized the needs of the schools in their sector of Multi-National Brigade East and has stepped in to help.

Knowing that an education is one thing no one can take away, members of TF 1-30 are equipping the children within their sector with the basic knowledge to begin a successful journey to a higher education, as well as providing brand new school supplies for the children as well as the teachers. Many soldiers are volunteering to go into the classrooms to teach classes in addition to their regular duties.

Task Force 1-30 showed its appreciation for the administrators' and teachers' hard work and dedication with a framed certificate that was presented to each school within its

sector on Teacher Appreciation Day.

"The idea of a school program was in place before we arrived in country, however, being that our commander is a former English professor from the United States Military Academy at West Point, he wanted to place an even greater emphasis on the schools than had ever been done before," explained First Lt. Jeremy Bowling, the executive officer for HHC 1-30, as well as the education coordinator for their Schools Assistance Program.

"His logic was that a majority of the local leaders were former school teachers, and/or administrators. If they could get the message out of peace and stability in the schools, it would reach ten fold the actual number of people we were teaching in the classrooms," said Bowling.

"The children go home and tell their parents, who in turn tell their friends, and the administrators, who eventually assume leadership roles, will already have a strong base of trust built with KFOR from previous involvement in the schools."

"Also, if we assist the children in

learning to speak English, then eventually the Serbs and Albanians would have a common language which could then be used to communicate between the two groups," Bowling said.

The sponsorship portion of the program was Bowling's idea, and was based on the premise that if they could help provide some of the material needs for the teachers and students, then it would enable them to teach more classes to more students. It would also give KFOR soldiers exposure to



Spc. Molly Jones/photo

First Lt. Nol Chine, a platoon leader for Alpha Company 1-30, presents the principal at one of Alpha Co.'s schools with a Teacher Appreciation Certificate.

a greater number of students in the classroom, (Please see **TEACHERS**, page 15)

Engineers make repairs to ethnically diverse school

by Spc. Molly Jones
Staff Writer

PONESH/PONES, Kosovo— Shortly after a visit to the ethnically diverse Zenel Hajdin/Sveti Sava Elementary School by Task Force Falcon Commander Brig. Gen. Keith Huber, construction work began to make repairs on the building, as he had promised.

"You are the role models for the rest of Kosovo, because you have put aside your violent history for the welfare of the children," Huber said to the teachers during his visit to the school in February.

During this visit, the promises that TFF would assist in the repairs of the school building were fulfilled. To keep these promises, Charlie Company 27th Engineer Battalion (Airborne) was tasked with this large project.

"The roof had several leaks in it," said Staff Sgt. Kevin Rast, part of the crew from C Co. working at the school.

"A few years ago they were trying to build a new school, but couldn't agree on the specifications for the school," Rast continued to explain.

Once the Combat Engineers were tasked with the project, the schedule was set and they had 10 days to complete the new roof from start to finish. During the period of time that the building was under construction, the classes were held in six GP-medium tents just outside of the school.

Soldiers from Alpha Co., Task Force 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, at the hard site 100 meters away



Spc. Molly Jones/photo

Spc. Joshua Thomas, of C Co., 27th Eng., attaches mesh material to the underside of the roof to keep out the birds and help keep the air circulating through all year long.

from the school, kept watch over the children to ensure their safety as strength from its diversity."

the construction proceeded.

"We've had several local civilians, from both ethnicities, help in the take down of the old roof, but in the process the ceiling began to fall down. So our next project will be to repair the ceiling and do some electrical work before we leave," said Rast.

"In the past week, we've constructed 23 of the trusses," explained Rast. "They were pretty big, so we had to use a forklift to get them up."

"This is a very big project for us," said Rast.

There were some difficulties in the beginning due to rain, which soldiers had not seen in quite some time, but the weather cleared up after a couple days and proved to be nice and warm. This improvement in the weather helped speed the process up for the engineers and put them a little ahead of schedule.

"We have done several projects around Kosovo to improve their quality of life, and we have several more lined up to do before we redeploy," Rast explained. The soldiers enjoy doing work for a greater good, and knowing that what they are doing will make a difference in the lives of the children.

"The experience has been great. The people love that we're doing this. We've had the Serbian and Albanian mayors come up to visit several times, along with students, parents, and the teachers. They are all very glad we're out here," said Rast.

The project came off a success, and the school and community as a whole should be looked upon by all of Kosovo as an example of tolerance. As Huber said to them in his visit, "a democratic society gains its

Commentary

Being dutiful in the U.S. Army is fulfilling our obligations

by Spc. Rodas Rony
TFF JVC
Camp Able Sentry

Duty is the action of fulfilling our obligations at any given time or situation and is the core of everything our Army is and does. The U.S. Army is one of the greatest organizations in the world. The seven Army values: Respect, Honor, Selfless Service, Loyalty, Duty, Integrity and Personal Courage, are not just values, but guidelines that every soldier in the U.S. Army should live by. In order to live by these values we have to be able to have the right frame of mind.

I remember the first day when I

became part of our great military. Other than raising my hand, which meant a lot to me, I didn't know much about the obligations of being a soldier and I was a little bit confused. I didn't know what the days or years ahead were going to bring. Soon thereafter, I realized that the organization that I was in was a way-of-life, it was becoming part of who I was, it changed my mind in every single aspect. I was discovering what being a soldier was about. Duty was one of the army values that helped me realize that my country and its citizens, the well being of my fellow soldiers, the freedom that we enjoy day by day, depended on how well I would perform my daily duties as a soldier.

Teamwork can accomplish a lot of great things. As a soldier my obligations are very important. Being able to serve my country is more than an honor, it is a very satisfying and self fulfilling obligation, that makes every day that goes by a great day, regardless of weather conditions or how far away from home I have to perform my duties. During my first enlistment in the U.S. Army, I had the opportunity to discover a lot of new things about myself such as how hard, but satisfying it is to dig a fox hole or how important was to pull guard duty. Performing my duties on the daily basis had changed me inside out. I felt that I was shaping myself to the point where Duty was no longer a Duty

but a honor to be able to do as I was told in the name of freedom and service to my nation.

In conclusion, out of all the seven Army Values, Duty is the one that I consider the foundation of my military bearing. No matter how physically challenging or mentally stressful my military obligations can get at times, I am able to accomplish my mission as an individual or as a part of a team by having that army value engraved in my mind and soul. Duty is what is keeping the United States of America, the most powerful nation in the world with the help of God, our armed forces and our citizens.

Scouts fire under bright skies provided by Mortar platoon

by Spc. Molly Jones
Staff Writer

RAMJANE RANGE, Kosovo—A long week of gunnery for the soldiers of the Scout Platoon part of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Task Force 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment, from Fort Benning, Ga., culminated in an illuminating finale when they performed their night firing under the bright skies provided by their adjacent Mortar Platoon.

The scouts are used to performing reconnaissance for their counterparts behind them. During a recon mission, which could quite possibly happen at night, the mortars can literally turn night into day for them, when illumination rounds are fired toward the heavens.

The more stationary artillery units could do this job, but the mortars have the ability to pick up and move with the scouts.

"If they ever ran into trouble, a more realistic mission, would be to give them cover fire with High Explosive (H.E.) rounds to help them withdraw from the location," said Capt. Matthew Howard, mortar platoon leader.

"They will usually roll out with the line companies to support us and get closer," explained Staff Sgt. Branon Ryals, of the Scout Platoon. "If that isn't possible we would then have to call in the big guns, the artillery."

Ryals explained that even though the artillery can provide similar support, the mortars are much faster, and most of the time,

speed is the key.

Although both platoons were working to-

gether, they had completely different missions. The scouts had the opportunity to fire their M2 .50 caliber machine guns at night with the support of the mortars. Their targets were slightly difficult to see, even under an illuminated sky, but the targets the mortars had were much more challenging.

"Our mission here tonight is primarily what we call 'floating the bubbles,'" explained Howard. "What that means, is that we make sure we line up our redicals with the aiming stakes that we have out there. Dropping a round down the tube moves the redical each time, and being able to put the rounds down range allows us to line those back up under practice," he continued.

"The toughest part for us firing at night is simply lining up the redicals and the aiming stakes. For us, it's aiming at two chem-lights, hundreds of meters away, that you have to line up in your redical, in the dark, with nothing more to help you see than another chem-light," said Howard.

"With their help in something like this, firing illumination rounds, it helps us see and acquire the target much faster and kill it," said Ryals.

The illumination rounds themselves can light up an area the size of half a grid square, or 500 meters, depending on illumination or HE rounds.

"We (mortars) are mobile and can move much faster than the artillery. Where ever the scouts go, we can follow behind them a lot quicker. If they move laterally, we can move laterally," said Howard. "The biggest thing is speed that we can provide for them."



Spc. Molly Jones/photo
Spc. Heath Adams, the driver for Capt. Kevin Brown, the commander of HHC, 1-30, has the opportunity to "hang" a round, or load the round with the mortar platoon firing at night in support of the scouts.

Multi-ethnic market symbolic of Kosovo's road to recovery

by Spc. Bill Putnam
Staff Writer

KOSOVSKA KAMENICA, Kosovo—"Yeah, I'd say the market is packed today," Pfc. Matthew Long said as he drove past the multi-ethnic market held in the north end of this town.

Every Friday around 7 a.m. local Serb, Albanian, and Roma vendors set up shop for a few hours. Two squads of military police from the 1st Platoon, 66th MP Company (Task Force 504th MPs from Fort Lewis, Wash.), stand watch in shifts while the three groups buy or sell from one another.

But because of the cold, breezy weather on Friday, Mar. 8, the MPs wondered how many would shop like they have every Friday since the market opened in December 2001.

The market is a sign that things in Kosovo are changing. Even though Kamenica is a relatively calm town, there was some resistance to the market. Eventually it opened and proved to be a success.

It is, as Staff Sgt. Shawn Walden, a squad leader in the platoon, said, one of the few things they've seen change since they arrived here last November. That doesn't mean change hasn't occurred, the changes that did happen are now becoming visible, he added.

The market here is a good example of that. It opened in early December with a few problems. Eventually it grew from only a few vendors and customers to a large crowd of each.

The market is also fostering ethnic cooperation in the outlying communities. From different sources, Walden has been told that shop owners of different ethnic groups and towns are talking to each other about what is and isn't selling each week.

"If we can get them working on a commercial basis, that's a good start," said Walden.

The squad patrols through the market as a confidence builder for the locals. Inside, the market is a beehive of activity. Stands of every description and size compete for customers. Vendors stand next to their wares and talk with customers, or encourage prospective customers to look at their products.

Music stands selling folk music, rolling-restaurants in the back of vans, produce and flower stands crowd in amongst cigarette vendors, stands piled with the latest European fashions, and even furniture vendors are here.

The market was even packed during the cold months of January and February, according to Sgt. Josue Perez.

Even though the market is crowded, cars weave between pedestrians crossing the bridge in front of Walden.

He hated to point out that people here have no fear of vehicles.

"They say that they've been through bombing campaigns, driven from one end of the province to the other, it's just a car (to them)," said Walden.

Long hasn't seen too many changes either, but he said this appreciation of being American has changed because of his time here.

One of the first things he noticed this winter was the housing construction. He saw that the houses are brick and mortar with no insulation and wondered how people stayed warm. Then he saw the outdoor toilets.

"I don't know how they do it, and I have heat all the time and plumbing," said Long.

Walden noticed more cars leaving the parking lot next to the market and the crowd crossing the bridge was bigger. He asked Perez, over the radio, if the crowd was thinning out.

Perez replied that it was clearing out, and Walden said they'd leave for the Kamenica Sub-Station a few minutes later.

As another successful market day wound down, Walden feels that, in the short time it's been open the market is now a part of the community.

"It's been going on this long without any problems. It's here for the long haul," said Walden.

Pumped up ...

Soldiers compete for Mr. and Mrs. Task Force Falcon

by Sgt. Jamie Brown
Senior Editor

CAMP BONDSTEEL—Soldiers posed, pumped and flexed their muscles at the Southtown gym here on March 24 as they competed for the title of Mr. And Ms. Task Force Falcon.

The Mr. & Ms. Task Force Falcon 2002 Body Building Competition pitted three females and six males against each other in a contest reminiscent of a Mr./Ms. Universe competition.

Johnny Davis, a director with MWR created the event.

"I am the Fitness coordinator for Bondsteel and Body Building is my sport. I compete all over the world," he said. "So I thought I would help train soldiers to become Body builders if they were interested."

And interested they were. The soldiers, however, had different degrees of experience in bodybuilding, and different reasons for participating.

"I participated in the competition, because I am a bodybuilder and I wanted to continue doing what I do," said CW2 Roy L. Rucker Sr., CW2, ACE/G2, SYSCON ACE OIC. "I also have four competitions to compete in when I get back to the states, so this helps me to stay very close to competition shape."

"I participated because I thought I had potential and I didn't want to look back later and say, 'what if' or, 'I wonder if I could have,'" said Capt. Dion Lyons, HHC TFF, Deputy Command Judge Advocate and Chief of Justice.

"I wanted to push myself physically and mentally for this challenge, I knew that this would get my body in shape and going to the gym would keep my time occupied," said Pfc. Natalee Goble, HHC 1-10 Avn. Regt.



Contributed photo

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Roy Rucker and Pfc. Natalee Goble, Mr. and Ms. Task Force Falcon, proudly pose with their first place awards.

As the competition approached, soldiers stood behind the curtains onstage, and dealt with the emotions of fear, excitement, confidence and nervousness.

"I was extremely nervous but I knew I had to look good," said Sgt. Anne Archer, Task Force Medical Falcon.

"I felt pretty good," said Rucker. "I wasn't nervous at all because I have done competitions many times before. It also felt good just to be able to help everyone else with their first competition."

"I was nervous, but very excited," said Lyons. "All the guys backstage had great attitudes, it was unexpectedly posi-

tive. We weren't competing against each other, but against ourselves. Everybody helped and encouraged each other. There was no tension or attitudes. It was a very positive event."

Once the event began, soldiers took turns posing and flexing for the judges, and the packed crowd, accompanied by their own choice of music. The contestants also had to stand on stage and pose beside their fellow competitors.

When the dust cleared, and the judges had tallied their votes, prizes were given out, but everyone was a winner.

Winning first place in the female category was Goble, followed by 1st Lt. Christina Good, ASG and Archer.

Rucker won the heavyweight division and was crowned Mr. Task Force Falcon. 1st Lt. Angel Estrada, 10th FSB, finished second in the heavyweight division.

In the medium weight category, Lyons finished first followed by Sgt. Erin Woodward, 10th Signal Bn. and Spc. Marlon Jenkins, 10th Sig. Bn.

The winner in the lightweight category was CW2 Robert Smith, 3-6 FA.

When the event was over, the contestants congratulated each other on a job well done. Several of the soldiers said they were glad that they participated in the event, and that MWR had put it together.

"MWR is doing a great job over here," said Lyons. "All work and no play would drive us all crazy. We need something else to focus on; preferably positive distractions to keep us from burning out. From your job, to talent/fashion shows, poetry sets, soldier boards, salsa classes, personal fitness training, the gospel jubilee, sports tournaments and college classes; there really is something for everyone. Since we all have to be here, why not try to make the most of it."

"Being in a deployed environment people need to set goals," said Archer. "This is the perfect place to develop your goals of losing weight and getting in the best shape of your life."

Provost Marshal's office has historical pieces for peacekeepers

by Spc. Terry Boggs
Staff Writer

CAMP BONDSTEEL—As peacekeeping efforts continue in Kosovo, illegal weapons are being collected, confiscated and destroyed on a regular basis. For the people of Kosovo, this means less violence and, hopefully, a step towards peace in this war-ravaged region.

For the soldiers of KFOR, however, it means something totally different. It opens the door for the possibility of taking home a piece of history, one of these made-safe weapons.

Capt. Kevin Surfass, Air Defense Coordinator, TFF HHC G-3, outlined exactly what kind of weapons are available and what needs to be done in order to secure one and have it shipped back to a unit.

"Weapons are confiscated during search or come in through the Amnesty Program," said Surfass. "We used to send the weapons to the Provost Marshall, who would file them and put them in storage. Then about every two-months we would be given a destroy date, take them up to the Greek sector, and melt them down in this huge furnace."

Then, one day a couple of years ago, the weapons were made available for units to bring

back to the United States as historical pieces.

"Right now we have 290 weapons available (on this program)" added Surfass. "We have from heavy and light machine guns (such as the AK-47), several varieties of handguns, and a couple shotguns.

"All have been de-milled. Either the bolts are welded shut or the barrels are filled with lead. It makes it so you can't fire them."

So the weapons are safe when they are distributed, but there still remains the question of paperwork. It sounds like there might be a lot involved, but according to Surfass, there really isn't.

"The Provost Marshal will give you your S-4 (or supply section) a blank packet. Your S-4 will fill it out. Then a couple days later your S-4 will come back to the Provost Marshall and pick up the last piece of paper, which states that this weapon is now de-milled. S-4 will then put it in the packet, and go to the G-4's office and turn the packet in."

The turnaround time for the paperwork is actually about a week. However, once everything is done here it needs to go to USAREUR, where it could sit for up to 2 years.

According to Surfass though, the PMO's office is always trying to find ways to shorten the length of time it takes to get the weapons out.

And, just when you thought this deal couldn't get any better, you get not just one, but up to three weapons to take home with your unit. A smaller unit, such as a Company or detachment, can get two, whereas a battalion can score up to three.

Also, a unit can come into the PMO office and choose what kind of weapon it wants. Fortunately, the amount of weapons that are available is decreasing, due to the fact that less and less are being turned in or confiscated. There are still plenty for everybody, though.



Spc. Terry Boggs photo

Sgt. Tina Haire, SWSS weapons custodian, displays weapons that are available for units to take back to the States.

As far as words of wisdom, Surfass offered this:

"If a unit wants to pursue this process, they need to go in there early. They will choose a weapon, and do the paperwork (paperwork takes about a day)."

Unfortunately, for the 3B rotation, the deadline for requesting a weapon (or 2) is past. For the incoming rotations, however, there are ample opportunities to secure one of these fine artifacts and have them shipped home for display in your unit.

All it takes is a little paperwork and a lot of patience, two things soldiers are very familiar with.

In other words, hurry up and wait.

The best of the 131st MPAD:

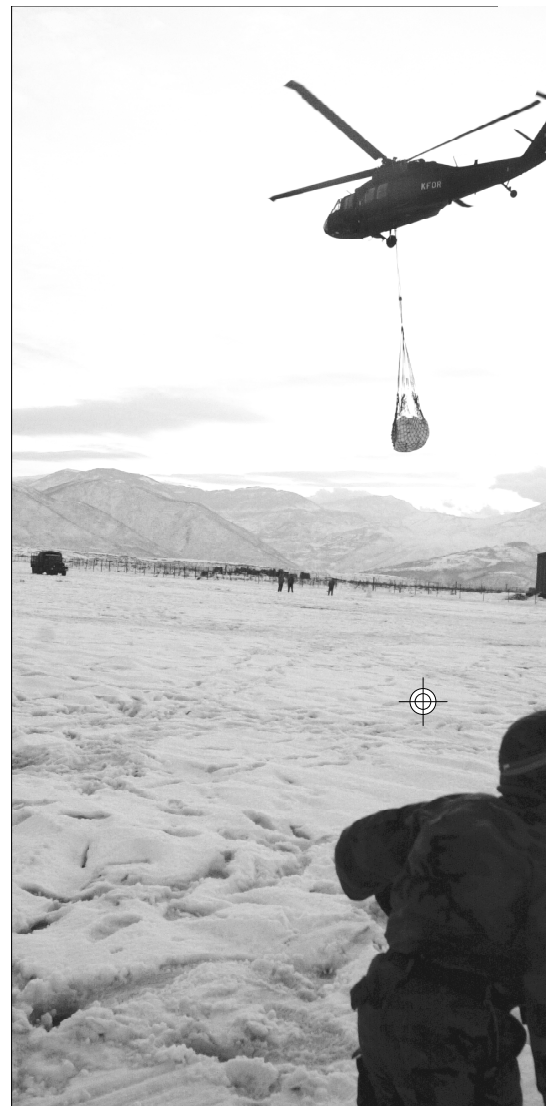
As Rotation 3B begins to wind down, during this issue and the April 15th edition of the Falcon Flier we will be sharing some of our best and most interesting photos with you that didn't appear in earlier editions. Special thanks to unit journalist, Spc. Bill Putnam for his help with this edition's photo center-spread.



Staff Sgt. Ian Trower, a squad leader in C Co., 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry Regiment (TF 2nd of the 14th Infantry) uses a spot light to search the inside of a building during a late-night patrol of Dobracani, Kosovo, on Dec. 14-15, 2001.



Pfc. Thomas Lewis, a M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon gunner, provides cover fire as Sgt. Terrance Sampson, his team leader, returns from destroying a bunker during squad movement-to-contact lanes at Falcon Range 3 near Pasjane, Kosovo. Lewis and Sampson are infantryman in Co. A, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment (TF 2-14).



A soldier from the 10th Logistical Task Force watches a UH-60 Black Hawk take off during Operation Mountain Relief. TF Drag together to sling load nearly 40 tons of flour to three isolated moun during the humanitarian relief operation held Jan. 18-24, 2002.

***—Photos by Spc. Bill Putnam/
Alabama Army National Guard***



' Task Force watches a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from Task
eration Mountain Relief. TF Dragon and the 10th LTF worked
ons of flour to three isolated mountain villages in eastern Albania
eration held Jan. 18-24, 2002.

ic. Bill Putnam/131st MPAD,
' National Guard



A baby reacts to Spc. Jorge Martinez's cold hands during a Medical Civilian Aid Program at Pasjak,
Kosovo, Dec. 3, 2001. Martinez is a combat medic in Headquarters, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regt. (TF
2-14).



Spc. Clinton Davis, a military policeman the 66th MP Co., talks with Freddie, his platoon's translator,
during a patrol of the multi-ethnic market held every Friday in Kosovska Kamenica on March 8,
2002.

Tax 101: Understanding your 1040EZ

by Spc. Tiffanie Tribble
TFF Legal Office

Someone once said that if politicians filed their own taxes, we would have had tax reform a long time ago! Admittedly, tax forms are sometimes difficult to understand. By the end of this article, you will feel comfortable with the 1040EZ- the easiest, shortest most often used form in the Task Force.

To see if you are eligible to use the 1040EZ, determine your filing status. Only two filing status' are allowed on Form 1040EZ: Single, and Married Filing Jointly without dependents. It is important to use the correct filing status to ensure that you are using the lowest bracket for your situation.

You can use the filing status "Single" if at the end of the year either of the following is true:

- You were married
- You are legally separated,

according to your state law, under a decree of divorce or separate maintenance

You can use the "Married filing Jointly" status if...

- You were married as of December 31, 2001, even if you did not live with your spouse at the end of the year.
- Your spouse died in 2002 and you did not remarry in 2001.

This status can be used even if there is only one earned income, or if you did not live with your spouse the entire year. If you file a joint return, it must be signed by both parties (or a power of attorney attached) and any tax liability will be a joint responsibility. You may not amend the return to change filing status.

If you earned less than \$50,000 and qualify for one of these filing status' you are ready to tackle the 1040EZ. First, complete the name and address blocks. Use an address that is stable and easily accessible, as it will be used by IRS to send you any type of correspondence (checks, tax forms). Next, enter your social security number exactly as it appears on your social security card. An incorrect social will delay the processing of any refund amount, and you may disqualify you from receiving credit for any social security benefits.

Now is the time to decide whether you want to contribute to the Presidential Election Fund. The fund helps pay for presidential election campaigns, by decreasing the dependency of candidates to rely on large contributions from individuals and corporations. You can elect to contribute \$3 and if filing a joint return, so can your spouse. Whether or not you contribute does not affect the amount of tax you owe or the amount of your refund.

Follow along with the 1040EZ form as the line by line explanation continues!

Line 1 (Wages, Salaries, and tips)

On Line 1 enter the total of your wages, salaries and tips. This is usually the amount in Box 1 of your Form(s) W-2. Also add any income from Scholarship and fellowship grants that was not reported to you on Form W-2.

Line 2 (Taxable Interest)

Taxable interest is any interest income that was earned from a bank, money market certificates, credit unions, savings bonds, etc. Each payee (institution) should send you a Form 1099-INT or



Sgt. Julia Long, TFF Legal Office, right, located in Camp Bondsteel's Admin Alley, Building 1340A, discusses information pertinent to filing a 1040EZ tax form with Pfc. Dustin Weber, 110th MI. The TFF Legal office will be preparing and electronically filing taxes until April 15th.

Cpl. Taylor Barbaee/photo

Form 1099-OID. Report all taxable interest even if you did not receive these forms. The amounts from these forms may be available to you by calling the institutions customer service line or by accessing their web pages. If you earned tax-exempt interest, print "TEI" and the amount to right of the words "Form 1040EZ." Do not add this amount into your taxable interest on line 2.

Line 3 (Unemployment Compensation, Qualified State Tuition Program Earnings, and Alaska Permanent Fund Dividends)

You should receive a Form 1099-G that list the amounts of any unemployment compensation that was received for the year, and any distributions from a Qualified State Tuition Program. Residents of the state of Alaska must add the amount received from the Permanent Resident Fund here.

Line 4: (Adjusted Gross Income)

Adjustments are the total of your income after additions or subtractions from other sources. Adjusted gross income is a number used for tax purposes to figure credit limitations, and is also used on a majority of state tax forms.

Line 5: Can your parents (or someone else) claim you on their return?

Line 5 asks if you can be claimed as a dependent on someone else's return, and gives the amounts of your standard deduction. You can be claimed as a dependent if you and/or your spouse are under the age of 19 or are a full time student under the age of 24. If you are the dependent of someone else, you are a dependent. The page of the 1040EZ contains a worksheet for figuring this amount.

A deduction is money that is subtracted from your adjusted gross income. Using the form 1040EZ you are only allowed to take the Standard deduction.

Line 6: (Taxable Income)

Subtract your deduction amount (Line 5) from your adjusted gross income (Line 4). If your deduction is larger than your adjusted gross income, enter 0. The result is the only amount of money that is taxed by the

Federal Government.

Line 7: (Rate Reduction Credit)

Because President Bush reduced tax rates by 5 percent, the IRS sent advance payments of the credit anticipated from your 2000 return. The credit is meant to reduce your tax. You can qualify for up to 5 percent of your taxable income up to the maximum credit amount. The maximum amount of the credit is \$300 for Single taxpayers and \$600 for Married Jointly.

Line 8: Federal Income Tax Withheld

The amount(s) withheld from your income from January 1st to December 31st of last year can be found in Box 2 of your W-2(s).

Line 9 (Eamed Income Credit)

Eamed Income credit is a special refundable credit given to people who worked and earned less than \$10,710. Take another look at your W-2. Box 12 may contain an amount annotated by a Q. This is the amount of unearned income that you have received from Uncle Sam in the form of benefits, such as billeting and meal cards. This amount must be added to amount in Box 1 of your W-2 Form to determine if you qualify. The instructions for figuring the amount of any EIC Credit you can take can also be found @ www.irs.gov.

Line 10: Total Credits and payments

Add the amounts of any credits that you qualified for and the amount of federal taxes that was withheld. (Lines 7-9a).

Line 11: Tax.

Using the tax table which can be found at www.irs.gov or in IRS Publication 17, figure out the amount of tax that is owed on your taxable income (Line 6) Enter the amount here.

Line 12: This is your refund.

Subtract the amount of tax that is due (Line 11) from the amount of paid, plus credits (Line 10). If the result is a positive number, enter it on 12a. This is the amount of money that was overpaid to government and due to you! If the result is a negative

number, this is the amount tax that is owed to government; enter it on line 13.

The hardest part is over!!! You can elect to have any refund direct deposited. Direct deposit is faster than waiting for the government to issue you a check, mail it and then wait in long lines at the bank just to deposit it. All the information needed to direct deposit can be found on your check. The routing number is a 9-digit address assigned to you. Your account number that identifies your account within the bank can be found in the lower right hand side of your check. Be sure to double check all the numbers entered here, the IRS is not responsible for a lost refund due to you entering the wrong information.

If you owe money, that amount can be paid by check, money order, or credit card.

Make the check or money order payable to the "United States Treasury". Be sure to include the following information; name, address, daytime phone number, and SSN. Also write, "2001 Form 1040EZ" in the memo/for section or your payment.

Do not send cash or enclose payment with the return.

If you cannot pay all at once, you can request an installment plan. However, if your request is granted you will be charged costly fees and late payment penalties on the tax not paid by April 15th. You should only use this method as a last resort. A third designee is someone that you can elect to discuss your return with the IRS in your absence if any questions arise during processing. Simply enter their name, phone number and five numbers that they elect to serve as their personal identification number. Ensure they are willing to perform this duty for you before you name them as a designee! Finally, sign the return. The return is not valid unless it is signed. If only one spouse can sign the return, the other must send a special (Please see TAXES, page 11)

The people, people...

G-1 section makes personnel their personal mission

by Staff Sgt. Michael P. McCord
Press Section NCOIC

CAMP BONDSTEEL— They work behind the scenes. They don't walk the dark streets on patrol duty. They don't build the bridges or repair the crumbly roads of Kosovo, or even search for illegal weapons. But they know who does. In fact, the Task Force Falcon G-1 Section knows where every soldier in Task Force Falcon is serving. That's part of their job. This small section carries a large responsibility. Keeping up with a soldier's whereabouts encompasses more than meets the eye.

"On a routine basis we provide personnel and administrative support to Task Force Falcon and the commander of Task Force Falcon," said TFF G-1, Maj. Richard K. Bond. "We are also responsible for personnel accounting and strength reporting."

Units throughout the TFF area of operations turn in their strength of numbers to the G-1 section. The command group receives that information and makes decisions and projections based on those figures.

Sgt. Alex Howell, HHC, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, is the collection vessel for those numbers.

"I'm the strength manager for Task Force Falcon," said Howell. "I'm the one that's responsible for making sure I account for everybody, as far as the personnel side of the house. The strength manager tracks personnel on the ground, where they're located and things like that. There are a lot of pieces that go into that." Howell ensures the personnel events are reported up the chain in a timely manner.

"What I do is collect numbers," Howell said. "Units, on a daily basis, turn in how many personnel they have at each base camp, by the lowest level possible."

For instance, an infantry battalion would give me, by company and any other elements they have attached to them. I compile all the task force's numbers together and forward them to J-1, KFOR MAIN, USAREUR, as well as our own internal agencies."

While the thousands of KFOR troops are doing their part to ensure a safe and secure environment in Kosovo, G-1 also handles the unpleasant, but necessary task of casualty operations.

"We tie in the command group with the outside agencies," said Bond. "In other words, we have a reporting requirement to 1st PERSCOM and Fort Drum, so we, along with the SSB, are responsible for that piece of communicating with the unit to get the casualty documents and communicating with the unit to get the serious incident reports together for the Chief of Staff—before it goes up the chain. We are also responsible for processing the orders of the escort officer, any awards or promotions for deceased. Bottom line, keeping the Chief of Staff informed, in turn, keeps the commander informed on the situation."

This unsung group works as a team because almost all of them have worked together in the past.

(TAXES continued from page 10)

power of attorney for tax filing. Attach one copy of your W-2 to your return and one copy of any other document that was used.

The Legal Assistance Office, Bldg 1340A, in "Admin Alley" is preparing and electronically filing taxes until April 15th. You can have your money back in as little as 2 weeks! This leaves no excuse to let Uncle Sam hold on to your money any longer. Clients are seen by appointment only. Please call our appointment line, 781-4692 and speak to the most tax-savvy certified preparers on Bondsteel. **Over 500 clients served!**

Do you have a story or photo idea for the Falcon Flier? If so, please give us a call at 781-5200



Staff Sgt. Michael P. McCord/photo

Front Row (L to R): Capt. Jackie Smith, Maj. Richard Bond, Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Blas. Back Row (L to R): Spc. Jessica Swann, Spc. Donnie Watkins, Sgt. Alex Howell, Sgt. 1st Class Keith Heater.

"From where I come from, (Fort Drum) I work in the Division G-1," said Bond. "I worked as the Chief of the Personnel Operations Branch, so that experience has helped me become the G-1 (TFF G-1). What also helped us was five of the seven folks that came from the G-1 back at Fort Drum. We all worked in the same shop. That was a big plus. The two that have joined the team came to work with us for the MRE (Mission Readiness Exercise- Fort Polk, La.), staff exercises, and our own individual training and all of these events helped bring everyone together." Bond couldn't pass up an opportunity to single out each section member.

"I think it's been a great deployment for everyone, and I'll just go down by name and tell why I think that; Capt. Jackie Smith, Deputy G-1- it's been a great deployment for her because she's coming straight from the career course and being in this job will give her a chance to become more proficient in her G1/AG functional areas. It will mature her before she goes into command and that's what she'll do when she leaves here," said Bond.

Bond and his NCOIC, Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Blas, go back a long way at Fort Drum. "We served together when I was a lieutenant in the same rifle company back at Drum. This is his last deployment.

He is retiring. That's what I call a great way to go out and end a 20-year career," he said.

The man in charge of numbers counted down.

"Sergeant First Class Keith Heater is the Personnel Action Center NCOIC, and this is another great opportunity for him too," said Bond. "He, like SFC Blas, is retiring, and here's another with a great way to close out a 20-year career of dedicated service to this Nation and the Army. Recently promoted Sgt. Alex Howell, pinned on E-5 back in September. He's really doing two jobs here, one of them is as the Strength Manager, which normally is performed by a lieutenant or captain. He has progressed in his functional areas as a 75 H. Spc. Donnie Watkins, a specialist performing the job of an E-5 or E-6, is responsible for the awards for the entire task force. Spc. Jessica Swann is our Evaluations and Letters of Release NCO. She too is performing in a position that an E-6 did on the last rotation," he added. Bond described the developmental skills Swann learned and will take back to Fort Drum in her position within the DIVARTY PAC.

"It's been a great experience for everyone and in the time we've spent here, we've come together real well as the G1 Team," Bond said.

To be, or not be *taxed*

by Capt. David L. Gardner
10th Soldier Support Bn.

That is the question.

Here is the answer. Leave is never taxed! Base pay is however. Accrued leave is considered base pay and normally taxed when a soldier sells it back to the US Army upon ETS.

"Cashed in" leave accrued while deployed to a qualified Combat Tax Exclusion Zone (CTZE) is considered base pay earned while deployed and is not taxed. Currently, Kosovo is considered a CTZE.

Leave is used and sold by applying the principles of First In, First Out (FIFO). As leave is used, the days accrued first are the first to go.

Situation: Soldier "A" deployed to Kosovo from 1 Nov 01 to 1 Jun 02 and is honorably discharged on 1 Aug 02 with a leave balance of 54 days.

Solution: 54 Days- Leave Balance on 1 Aug 02
Less: 5 Days- Leave earned in Jun and Jul 02
(Taxed)

Less: 17.5 Days- Leave accrued during deployment (Not Taxed)

31.5 Days- Leave earned prior to the deployment (Taxed)

Answer: Thirty-six days "cashed in" leave are taxed and 17.5 days are not.

Visit your camp's finance office for more information.

Winners of MWR's March Women's History Month essay contest announced

Camouflage Amazons in Combat

by Sgt. Jessi Russell
HQ, A Co., 10th LTF

For many generations past, women have long fought to be included in the many facets of American society such as voting and holding prestigious positions within the government. However, the most intriguing of all is the battle to allow women to serve and defend their country with privilege, right, and honor. For me, as a female, being in the military means prestige, adoration, and pride in what I feel is one of the most valiant and traditionally revered professions that anyone would willingly give their life for. The real question is not if women can serve in any military capacity at all. The issue that we as a country have to face is whether women should or should not be allowed in combat.

I find myself constantly questioning this debate and where I place myself in the grand scheme of this dilemma. At one time, I perhaps sampled the thought of what being in combat would be like. But when I think back upon it, I was in Basic Combat Training and I was being trained to the same standards with the males to my left and to my right. I completed the seemingly endless 15-mile road marches, fired identical weapons, and rappelled the same terrifying towers just like my counterparts. There was no reason for me to believe that things were physically or emotionally harder for females. Because it wasn't.

It has often been told to me that women are held to

lesser simply be- are the the spe- be the first admit that almost un- physically m a l e s . this does necessar- are any of com- mission.



Sgt. Jessi Russell

that there are select females who are physically and mentally capable of the brutal rigors of combat. Just the same, there are many males physically incapable and mentally unwilling of being required to do exactly that.

I recall when I was in basic training the horrible pains it took to complete every road march the Drill Sergeants presented us with. My feet would blister and bleed every time and I tried every known remedy to prevent my boots from filling with blood. But I never once fell out of a road march. I remember my battle buddy marching alongside

standards cause they weaker of cies. I will soldier to women are deniably weaker than However, not mean ily than they less capable pleting their One must remember

me with shins so swollen it looked like she kept baseballs in her socks. But neither of us would fall out no matter how much we knew the pain would subside if we simply stopped. I painfully remember having my thumbnail ripped off by a M16, trigger finger partially severed by a PLS, and forehead spliced open by a SAW, and to this day, forever enduring the nickname "Third Eye Blind". It is because of this that I feel pure weakness is not in dealing with pain physically, but emotionally. I have never failed a mission, no matter how tired, how pained, and how emotionally drained I have been.

I have learned through my experiences and those of other women that a soldier will be consistently surprised by their own physical abilities, not necessarily because of hard work, but because of an unwillingness to fail. The only thing to me that matters in combat, is not physical strength, it is being able to depend on that person to your left and to your right. And if being physically and emotionally capable of doing this is what is required, then that is the only thing that should matter. The sex of the soldier to your sides should not even be thought of any more than what you had for breakfast.

All the while real women in the military continue to admirably perform their duties as soldiers, serving their country, and wondering why there is such a commotion over their willingness to serve. All I have ever asked for is a soldier, and as a woman, is the chance to be such an integral part of the United States Army... nothing more... nothing less.

First Place

Reflections of a Woman

by Pvt. 2 Leo Betancourt
C Co., 10th LTF

I remember waking up every morning to the warm smell of flour tortillas. It wasn't birds chirping or the Tijuana sun's radiant ascent. There was no alarm clock bidding me to wake and rush to responsibility. I rose to the diligence of my grandmother, a brown skinned, wrinkly, heavy-set woman hard at work in her small kitchen. She wore her usual red and white checkered apron, her hair so gray it looked snowy white. She made dozens of tortillas and sold them to the neighbors, mainly to keep herself occupied. People would come from other towns to buy her tortillas. Each morning as I stumbled out of bed, sleep still in my eyes, she would greet me like a king. Spoil me with loving words and comfort me with her eyes because they showed that she loved me. She would take the tortilla from the griddle, add a little butter and cool it with her breath so I could eat it with my eggs and beans.

My grandmother was Mexican as Mexico itself. Deep rooted in traditional family roles. The woman had her role in the home; cooking, cleaning, laundry, and going to the local market for groceries. What I most treasure of her being however is her power to nurture. Love and family motivated everything she did. Not a day would pass that she did not devote time to me. Whether it was to take me for a walk to the bakery or just sit and tell me stories. So special are those moments that I can still remember the aroma of the bakery approaching as we came within a few blocks. I can still feel the gentle texture

of her as she ran through during her A t five I re- the States school. drove me Tijuana to Angeles Datsun He intro- to my w a s



Pvt. 2 Leo Betancourt

a stranger. There was a tall, solitary palm tree in front of my mother's house. I hugged its rough dry bark and cried for hours before I tired and went inside my new home. Unlike my grandmother's this place had a fast pace. People coming and going, work in the city, cousins running around, noise and lights everywhere. Sirens would whine, horns honk, and neighbors would yell. And of course there was a new mother. A strong, light-skinned woman with long jet-black hair. More feminine features than my grandmother's; smaller hands, smaller feet, and a daintier frame, but she had a look of immutable will in her eyes. She would need that will as a single mom with three children.

large hands them my hair storytelling. the age of turned to to begin My uncle from Los in his red pick-up. duced me mother who pretty much

She worked seven days a week and then came home to cook, clean, and prepare the meals for the following day. I am awestruck by the fact that she fulfilled both parental roles so tirelessly. It seemed she never had a moment to herself. When she got home from work she would check that I had completed my schoolwork and made sure my clothes were presentable for the next day. There were also daily reminders of the value of an education as well as teaching me right from wrong. Her dream was the American dream and she passed it along to her children. Still she found time to love us; without question, without regret, or without asking anything in return. On my tenth birthday, pellet size raindrops were falling. I remember my mom coming home from work drenched. She had missed her bus. Her coat was permeated with rain and her face sagged from fatigue, but in her hands, wrapped in plastic grocery bags was a boxed birthday cake. She dimmed the lights and gathered the family around a candle lit cake that looked like it had an aura. We celebrated my first decade.

In this essay I celebrate my mother and grandmother. I celebrate women for their strength and love, their determination and sense of family, their struggles and will to overcome. I celebrate my mother and grandmother because regardless of their burdens or the weakness of their men they did not succumb to a role as defined by society; one of submissiveness and weakness. They defined their role as providers and nurturers. They exemplify the power and influence of women in the development of all citizens of the world. Above all, through their hardships they never lost sight of love and the importance of family.

Second Place

Don't forget to say thank you

Special to the Falcon Flier

Since 1992, the Adopt a Platoon Program has been an active and expanding program supporting deployed soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division. Retired Col. Mike Plummer is the program's creator and current coordinator. Col. Plummer felt that the establishment of a support program focused at the platoon level would provide the most individual contact for both soldiers and civilians. During the past few months the program organized 20 sponsors for the Sinai mission, 24 sponsors for the battalion in Bosnia, numerous sponsors for the soldiers in Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, and 115 sponsors for our soldiers here in

Kosovo.

With only a few weeks remaining until the TOA for the 3B rotation, soldiers and platoons here have the responsibility to thank their sponsors. Some of these sponsors include school kids, private organizations, businesses, churches and boy/girl scout groups from across the North Country. These sponsors have sent letters, photographs, care packages, homemade holiday decoration, books, and videos to our deployed soldiers. We have the responsibility to thank these sponsors for their time and effort, and if we do it right, their continued support.

The Adopt a Platoon program has been an effective program for almost 10 years, supporting thousands of

deployed soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division. In order to do our part in ensuring the continuation of this successful program, it is up to us to thank our sponsors so they know they are appreciated. This will help pave the way for the next time soldiers from Ft. Drum are deployed and the Adopt a Platoon program again asks for support from our North Country Neighbors.

If you have questions about the program or how to contact your sponsor, contact Maj. Thomas Weisz at DSN 781-5046 or email

Thomas.Weisz@bondsteel2.areu.army.mil

Greek officer has passion for infantry, KFOR mission

by Cpl. Taylor Barbaree
Editor

CAMP RIGAS FERAIOS, Kosovo— First Lt. Tasios Nikolaos of the Greek Army's 501st Mechanized Infantry Battalion believes there is no higher calling in life than serving as an infantry officer.

"How can I put it into words," the 31-year-old, 6-foot-1 inch, near 200 pound smiling giant said. "I don't enjoy any other branch better than serving in the infantry. This is the one job that allows me the opportunity to interact with the people of this country, while strengthening my (relationship) with my soldiers."

Fluent in the English language, Nikolaos said he chose four years at the Greek officers military academy over the mandatory service period that is a requirement for males after completing high school.

"In my country, it is a requirement to either join the military for eighteen months or go to college. I chose the officer's military academy because I knew at a young age that I wanted to be an officer.

"I enjoy the responsibility that comes with it," he explained. "I know that as an officer I have soldiers that are looking to me for guidance. I relish that and want to set a good example."

A native of Thessaloniki, Greece, which is located in the country's central region, Nikolaos said he didn't know much about Kosovo when he volunteered to come here in September.

"I transferred into my present unit, so that I could be here," he said, adding that the experiences of working with KFOR have helped him hone his skills as a military officer.

"Being in this environment has allowed me to work more with my soldiers and be a better leader.

"I have also enjoyed learning about the KFOR mission here and communicating with soldiers and officers from the other countries."

However Nikolaos said there are some disadvantages of being away from home, despite it being only a three-hour drive from Ferizaj/Urosevac.

"Being away from family is just a part of the commitment that one makes while serving. However, being here makes you miss home and everything that makes it special."



First Lt. Tasios Nikolaos

Cpl. Taylor Barbaree/photo

Hellenic soldiers of 501st Infantry take pride in experiences of Kosovo

by Cpl. Taylor Barbaree
Editor

CAMP RIGAS FERAIOS, Kosovo— The land of Hellenic people boasts a proud tradition. As part of the KFOR peacekeeping mission, a contingent of soldiers from the Greek Army's 501st Mechanized Infantry Battalion is proud to uphold it while serving in the Multinational Brigade (East) sector.

"This is a proud, new experience for us everyday," said 1st Lt. Karakonis Eleas, OIC for Alpha Company of the 501st Mechanized Infantry Battalion based at a pipe factory in Ferizaj/Urosevac.

The company's mission is to deter the primitive structure and other buildings in the township from being damaged.

"We are here to prevent this factory and places of religious worship from being further damaged. During the war these structures suffered much damage. We also assist UNMIK in preventing any civil unrest," Eleas said from his office during March while adding



Greek soldiers man one of their vehicles at Camp Rigas Feraios. This vehicles are a frequent sight in the Ferizaj/Urosevac area.

Sgt. Jamie Brown/photo

that the KFOR objective is succeeding in a providence that borders his country.

"I take a personal interest in this mission," the 31-year-old said.

"Kosovo is not far from my home, so we are all proud that tensions here have calmed down dramatically.

"I think the people here have

accepted the fact that we are here and have helped in bringing peace to this region. That make's a big difference. When they see the (positives) in peace, then gradually everything here will improve."

Sgt. Elios

Kourkoya, a native of Athens, Greece and a special forces soldier assigned to Alpha Co., spends time on his 8-hour shift insuring that Kosovo remains free of the past violence that brought the NATO and the UN led mission here.

"I believe communicating with the residents here is important and helps them to better understand why it is a must to get along with each other," he said.

Sgt. George Adraktas, a 24-year-old infantryman, noted the experience has been worth the disadvantage of being away from home.

"The weather here can be a lot harsher than home," he said. "Other than that, I have enjoyed my time here. This has helped us to be better as soldiers and people."

Infantrymen hone warfighting skills with live fire exercises

by Spc. Bill Putnam
Staff Writer

PASJANE, Kosovo—Bullets flew, grenades exploded, and light infantrymen yelled over the cacophony of machine guns and assault rifles as 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment (Task Force 2-14, of Fort Drum, N.Y.) conducted squad-level live fire exercises.

"Don't forget the purpose of this was to learn," 1st Lt. Kristopher Skinner, a platoon leader in Alpha, 2nd of the 14th Infantry, said to one of his squads after they had completed a run through the lane.

The scenario they ran—an assault on three bunkers—was a new one, according to Sgt. Joseph Oakley, a team leader in Alpha.

Oakley thought the scenario was a great one because it gave the soldiers in the squad practice on several different concepts.

"Keeping it basic and simple was good. They needed to learn to apply suppressive fire, shifting fire, and assault plans," he said. "Getting used to an assault made under smoke."

A safety briefing by Sgt. 1st Class James Rupert was conducted after rounds were issued. Each weapon was checked for a clear chamber and Rupert explained that safety is as important as training.



Spc. Bill Putnam/photo

Two soldiers from Company A, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment (Task Force 2-14) run up the sides of the ravine to a fire by a support line at Falcon Range 3 near Pasjane, Kosovo. TF 2nd of the 14th Infantry ran a squad-level live fire lane at the range during March.

After each scenario, heat waves came from the M-240B machine gun, and shell casings littered the ground. A short After Action Review was also held to review each squad's performance.

"I saw targets go up, then I saw targets go down," Skinner said during the AAR.

"The (M-240B) destroyed that bunker and that was a fantastic job," Skinner said to Pfc. Brandon Jackson the squad's machine gunner. His machine gun was the squad's main tool to suppress the enemy within those bunkers.

Beyond learning new tasks, the live fire has other values for the squad, said Oakley. "Any live fire builds confidence in each other," he explained.

As a fire team leader, Oakley's job is to lead infantryman in the assault.

A basic thing for a team leader to learn is "fire and maneuver," or the concept of direct small-arms fire to pin an enemy down, then moving to destroy that enemy, according to Oakley. He has the chance to practice those lessons during the range, he said.

Squad leaders are in charge of three soldiers out there, the team leaders and the M-240B gunner. The team leaders lead the rest of the guys, said Oakley.

Oakley and his team's objective was to knock out that first bunker.

"It's simple and straightforward," he said of his job.

"I'm really proud of my guys," Oakley said.

"Everybody executed their individual tasks, squad tasks, the (M-240B) team included," Oakley said.

Russian officer enjoys army life and working with Americans

by Spc. Bill Putnam
Staff Writer

KOSOVSKA KAMENICA, Kosovo—Russian army Maj. Oleg Larian began his one-year tour in Kosovo on an unbelievable day. His military career, however, almost didn't start 14 years ago. Luckily for him, relatives forged a patriotic spirit in him from an early age.

He arrived in this town to take command of the 1st Company, Russian 13th Tactical Group, Sept. 11, 2001, unaware of the terrorist attacks in the U.S., until someone told him a plane crashed into the Pentagon. Later that evening he saw television footage of the World Trade Center attack.

This is the 30-year old, career paratrooper's first time working with the Americans. It's something he admits he never expected to see as a soldier that entered the Soviet army at the end of the Cold War.

After entering the Soviet equivalent of the US Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., on Aug. 1, 1988, his early days as a soldier were devoted to learning how to fight the Americans.

"Back in 1988, I did not expect (to work with the Americans)," he said.

Three years later the Cold War officially ended with the end of the Soviet Union. Then things really opened up in the newly independent country of Russia.

The first Russian cadets started to attend the US Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. in the early 1990s. American students started to attend the Russian academy soon afterward.

"When the first American cadets went to our state military academy I began to understand that our joint service was a possibility," said Larian.

That joint service started in Bosnia's Multinational Division-North with Russian paratroopers and American mechanized infantrymen keeping the peace together in Bosnia.

Upon graduation from the military academy, Larian entered the Russian army's elite airborne corps.

It was the culmination of a "childhood dream" to

become a paratrooper he said.

His mother didn't want him to join the military at all. A doctor, she dreamt of him following in her footsteps.

"She dreamt that I would become a surgeon, but I became a surgeon of a different sort," he said, laughing.

Becoming a paratrooper was an "independent, personal choice," for him.

But that choice was probably influenced by a family tradition of patriotism that nudged him toward serving in the armed forces. His father's ill health kept him from serving, but his uncles served in the Soviet armed forces.

"No one forced me to do it, we'll put it that way," he said. "But in my family there is a sort of spirit if patriotism that is quite high... it's always been present in my family."

"It's generally thought that the army is good place (in my family)," he said. "In my family there is an opinion that if a man doesn't serve in the armed forces than he really isn't a man completely."

"Everyone should serve and defend their Motherland," he added.

This is his second company command. His first was in a service company of a Russian airborne brigade in Ryazand, Russia, about 200 kilometers southeast of Moscow. "It's a fantastic place," he said.

One of his proudest moments here in Kosovo happened three months ago. The 13th TG held a sports day and Larian's company won the day.

"(My company) turned out to be the absolute best," he said with a grin. "When I came in first



Maj. Oleg Larian

Spc. Bill Putnam/photo

place that was personally very gratifying.

"Personally it was good serving as a company commander. I will always remember the successes of my company."

For all the accomplishments he had in the army, nothing is as satisfying to him as his children. A married father of a young son and daughter, he looks forward to seeing them grow up in the future even if it means missing a few milestones in their lives now.

"When I left, my daughter did not know how to speak, now I talk to her on the telephone," he said.

His career goals are high but to him they are manageable, and is an example of the Cold War ending. After completing the Russian equivalent of the US Army's War College at Carlisle Barracks, Penn., and moving up the ranks, he wants to become a general in the Russian airborne.

"I will be a general... I think in about eight years," he said with a loud laugh. "They will send me a letter of congratulations from the United States!"

Chaplain's Corner

Climbing to Glory: You can't do it by yourself

by Chaplain (Capt.) Lew Messinger
Task Force Dragon (Aviation)

I currently find myself in a part of the world, and part of a great Army task force, that makes me think about birds, flight, and my mother's hometown of Wichita, Kan.

"Kosovo" in Serbian means "Field of Blackbirds"; so named for the battle-field (just north of Pristina) named Kosovo Polje or "Kosovo Plain", where in 1389 a great battle was fought between the armies of the Serb Prince Lazar and the Ottoman Turks. The Prince's efforts were devastating to his army but stopped the Turkish advance, if only for a time. Both Lazar and the Sultan were casualties of the battle. The Turks were initially repelled and did not invade the region again for another sixty years. When they did, there was no stopping them. But this almost-legendary battle has become a symbol of Serbian unity, strength and pride in an era when the greater Serb kingdom was flying high.

Albania is called the "Land of Eagles" upon which Skanderberg, less than fifty years later, took his turn at staving off the eventual Turkish conquest of the Balkans. Everyone new to Kosovo will immediately recognize that the blazon red flag and double-headed eagle is the standard for Albanian pride in this region.

Wichita, Kansas, is home to McConnell Air Force Base, Beach

Aircraft (now within Northrop Grumman), Cessna Aircraft Corp. and Learjet. Many hot, sunny afternoons can be spent outside looking up and seeing the stealthy B1B Blackbird. I reminisce!

Attainment of glory is the hope and goal of many an army (Serb, Albanian, Turk, or.....American?), even if it's a by-product of battles fought for much nobler reasons. Recall with me the 10th Mountain Division ("Climb to Glory!") Monument at South Memorial Dr. and Belvedere Dr. at Fort Drum.

There we find cast in bronze a very striking image of the soldier of yesteryear, crouching down from the pinnacle, *pulling up* the soldier of today. Make no mistake! The monument does not depict the soldier reaching the top by standing on the heads of others. The monument is not dedicated to self-serving individuals

who endeavor to achieve great heights on their own. The soldier's only way to get to the top is by the hand of the One Who Stands Above. So, perhaps the Hooah-statue on Belvedere could really be considered a particularly Christian depiction. Could it be?

April is fast upon us and those of us in theater since 1 November already have our boots (or rotorblades?) pitched toward home. Now is not the time to let go! If the Army is an Army-of-One-of-Anything it's an Army of One Community held together by common goals and now we must do our part in pulling the 1st ID up to Glory.

Birds of many kinds, and fighter and bomber aircraft (fixed-wing and rotary-wing) often fly in formations; not only for effect of numbers, but to preserve orientation, direction, and endurance during flight.

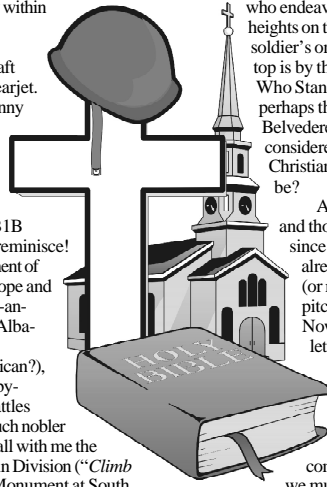
At this time of a six-month deployment, dangers of complacency and over-confidence abound when we give in to the temptation to "rest on our

laurels." Don't fall into the very-hooah trap called "go-it-alone-ism". Birds (and aircraft) who depart formations are usually distressed and fall out due to illness or injury. There's no reason to fly alone for any other reason. Remember, even the Lone Ranger had Tonto. Even the *Six-Million-Dollar Man* had Rudy. Some of us have put off dealing with issues that worry or anger us; perhaps thinking that six months is long enough to make it all go away. Don't let the prospect of our homecoming give way to fear or despair, simply because you feel compelled to "pull yourself up by your boot-straps."

Let's all be able to go home with our heads held high knowing we gave our best to preserve peace, or at least prevent hostility, for a people who were once total strangers to us. We will never look at the Kosovo or Balkans news headlines the same way ever again...honest! And, what if there's any glory for us in the end?

Finally, recall the words of St. Paul the Apostle in his First Letter to the Thessalonians (4:16-18) as he speaks of the things to come: "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven...and the dead in Christ will be raised first. Then we who are alive and left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall be with the Lord forever." The Lord reaches down to lift us up.

So, *why climb when you can fly?*



CBS Worship Service

Peacekeepers Chapel (North)

Sunday

8 a.m., Episcopal/Lutheran
9:30 a.m., Roman Catholic Mass
11 a.m., Collective Protestant
12:30 p.m., Gospel Service

Monday

7 p.m., Women's and Single Soldiers' Bible studies

Tuesday

7 p.m., Catholic RCIA

Wednesday

12 p.m., Roman Catholic Mass
6:30 p.m., Prayer Service
7 p.m., Bible Studies

Thursday

7 p.m., Choir Rehearsal (Gospel)

Friday

12 p.m., Muslim Prayer Service
7 p.m., Gospel Joy Night Service

Saturday

6:30 p.m., Stay Faithful Marriage Bible Study

South Chapel

Sunday

8 a.m., Roman Catholic Mass
9:30 a.m., Collective Protestant
11 a.m., LDS Service
4 p.m., Gospel Service

Monday

7 p.m., Collective Protestant Choir Rehearsal

Tuesday

12 p.m., Roman Catholic Mass

Wednesday

7 p.m., Bible Study

Thursday

7 p.m., Bible Study

Friday

8 p.m., Jewish

Saturday

11 a.m., Seventh Day Adventist Service
7 p.m., Choir Rehearsal (Gospel)

CMT Worship Service

Sunday

9 - 10:30 a.m., General Protestant Service
11 a.m. - 1 p.m., Gospel Service
1:30 - 2:30 p.m., LDS Worship
7 - 8 p.m., Catholic Mass

Monday

7 p.m., Chapel Movie Night w/ Discussion

Tuesday

7 - 9 p.m., Gospel Worship Practice

Wednesday

6:30 - 7:30 p.m., Gospel Worship Practice
7:30 - 9 p.m., Bible Study

Thursday

6 - 7 p.m., General Protestant Practice
7 - 8 p.m., General Protestant Bible Study
8 - 9 p.m., General Protestant Worship

Friday

12 - 1 p.m., Muslim Service in Annex
7 - 8:30 p.m.

Saturday

11 a.m. - 12 p.m., Seventh Day Adventist Worship

Sector Worship

Protestant

Saturday

2 p.m., Debelde
4 p.m., Binac Church

Sunday

Camp Magrath, 10 a.m.
Zintinje Church, 11:30 a.m.
Klokot, 2 p.m.
Mogila, 3:30 p.m.
Vrbovac Church, 4:30 p.m.
Vrbovac, 7 p.m.

Latter Day Saints

Sunday

Camp Magrath, 2 p.m.

Roman Catholic

Monday

Klokot, 2 p.m.
Vrbovac, 4 p.m.
Camp Magrath, 7 p.m.

Other Activities

Sunday

Movie Night- 11 p.m.

Tuesday

Bible Study, 8 p.m.

(ARTILLERY continued from page 1)

vicinity, they are using the "Smurfs".

And what happens if you hit one of these houses, even with a "Smurf"?

"Somebody's going to jail," said Barkley. "There is a big investigation, but your career is definitely on the line."

Of the 22 "Smurfs" fired on that

day, none hit any homes. In short, a successful mission and a good day's work.

The live fire was actually part of a certification program, according to Gray. They are required to certify with live-fire missions every 6 months, and they just happened to be

in Kosovo at the time of this particular certification.

"I'm proud to be a part of this unit," he added. "I got the greatest soldiers in the world, because I have paratroopers; some very motivated soldiers. I look forward to working with a long time into the future."

(TEACHERS continued from page 4)

and serve as a way of getting a foot in the door of the classrooms to start building a trusting relationship that is so important between KFOR and the citizens of Kosovo.

"I had no idea that either one of these aspects of our program would become so large and successful, but to date we have received over 2,000 lbs of donations," he said.

Scan your lanes...

Americans and Germans switch weapons during range training

by Sgt. Jamie Brown
Senior Editor

FERIZAJ/
UROSEVAC, Kosovo—
Seventy-four American
soldiers braved cold, wet
weather and fired unfamiliar
weapons on March 24 at the
Falcon 1 and Falcon 2
ranges here, in an attempt to
earn the coveted
Schutzenchnur. The
Schutzenchnur is a German
marksmanship badge, and
one of the few foreign
badges that U.S. soldiers are
allowed to wear on their
uniforms.

While the American
soldiers attempted to earn
the Schutzenchnur, 42 of
their German counterparts
attempted to earn American
rifle marksmanship badges.
The day's events were
coordinated by 1st Sergeant
George Bealonis, HHC TFF,
a task that he said was a
challenge.

"Beginning last October,
I tried to do coordination
with the German LNO, and
we've been trying to work
this issue out, so that we
could have the U.S. soldiers
get the opportunity to earn
their Schutzenchnur," he said.

"The problem is that with the new incoming
and outgoing, there was a little bit of trouble at the
beginning, but we finally got linked up. I'm basically
the man that's trying to run everything, and I've
done all the coordination. And then, of course, the
other units that are involved also receive slots, like
1-30th, 10th LTF, Task Force Dragon and 504th
MPs. They give us a total of 50 slots. I'm managing
the 50 slots along with their LNOs, and then they all
bring the soldiers to me, and we coordinate the
buses and then we go out and shoot."



Sgt. Jamie Brown/photo

American soldiers fire German rifles as they attempt to earn the coveted Schutzenchnur badge.

The soldiers who participated in the event
enjoyed the opportunity to try something different.

"We're going for the Schutzenchnur badge,
which is a European marksmanship badge," said
Spc. James Sanford, grenadier, B Co. 2-14 Inf.
(Camp Monteith). "You can either get a bronze,
silver or gold, depending on how you shoot. It's
shooting a rifle and a 9mm pistol. I personally
wanted to do it to try out the German's weapons. I
find it interesting. I wanted to see how they shot
compared to our weapons. I think that they shoot

very well, just as good as our
weapons."

Sanford wasn't the only
soldier who appreciated the
German weapons.

"I like their weapons
systems," said Staff Sgt.
Blake Robison, squad leader,
B Co. 2-14 Inf. (Camp
Monteith). "We don't get
enough opportunities to cross-
train with our allies, and this
was a good opportunity for
us. It felt like a toy. It had no
kick. It's real light and it's
easy to zero in on the target.
I'd recommend for other
soldiers to do this if they got
the opportunity."

"Basically we're firing
their rifle and their pistol,"
said Staff Sgt. Todd Russell,
squad leader, B Co. 2-14 Inf.
(Camp Monteith). "I think it's
going real well. Any time we
can work with a foreign
military, it's a good thing for
our soldiers. I personally like
their rifle. I haven't fired with
a pistol yet. It's lighter, it
doesn't have any recoil, and it
almost feels toyish. I like their
aim sight as well."

Trying out new weapons,
however, was not the only
motivation for these soldiers.
They also relished the chance
at getting the prestigious gold

medal.

"My squad leader when I was a private, he
had the cord and the medal for it, and I always
wanted one, so that's why I'm out here today," said
Sgt. Joshua Schmidt, team leader, B Co. 1-30,
(Camp Monteith).

And 33 American soldiers did just that, earning
the gold medal. Twenty-four soldiers went home
with the silver medal and 17 with the bronze.

Bealonis was pleased with the outcome.

"I think overall both sides did very well," he
said. "It's amazing to pick up a weapon that you do
not get to zero. You take it for the sights that are on
it, and you try to go out there and qualify and shoot.
A lot of it on both sides of the house, it falls back on
the basic fundamentals. If you have the basic funda-
mentals down, you'll do well while you're out
there."

This day was just the beginning, with several
other qualifications planned.

"We actually have three other ranges sched-
uled," said Bealonis. "One is going to be April 3,
which is going to be in MNB South and then the
other one is May 7, which may be a difficult one to
attend, due to the fact that we're doing transition at
that time. What I'm trying to do is build a rapport
up, so when my counterparts get here, I can pass
the buck to them, and they can continue on."

Today, however, Bealonis was happy that
soldiers have gotten a chance to participate in a
unique cross-cultural event.

"I try to gear a lot of the younger soldiers, the
specialists and below, to go get the Schutzenchnur,
because A, it looks on their uniform, and B it gives
them a little bit of cultural experience on how the
Germans shoot," Bealonis said. "And they actually
meet the Germans while they're out there on the
range. We've always had good rapport with the
Germans, so it actually gives them a different per-
spective, and they also meet a different culture. You
can only do this in Europe, and most of these
soldiers will never get a chance to do this again."



Sgt. Jamie Brown/photo

German soldiers fire American pistols.